

# *Edith A. Hambie Poetry Prize, 2017*

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## Louisiana, 1941

*by Taylor Alyson Lewis*

I'm too young to know how my soul will fly.  
*Maurice* once a language we trilled with  
Our tongues, my parents' slurring speech sighs  
To me, across oceans, across my bits  
Of memory—Louisiana is  
Both my mother and my father, lover  
And friend. Our black hands are our lowest sins.  
We are prisoners to the soil of debtors.  
One day my hands will grow things my children  
Eat and own, we will buy clothes cottonmade.  
No child of mine will wear small fingers thin  
And scraped with flesh, will dream of their escape  
From rows of cash crops, eyes crusted with dirt.  
God molded *Maurice* as my rebirth.